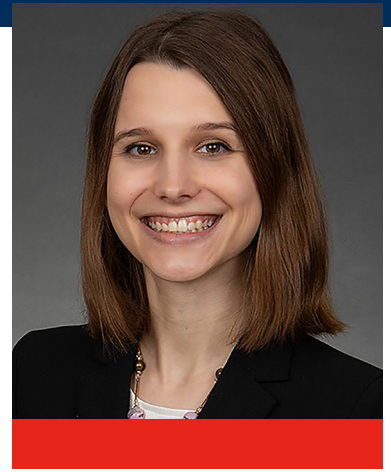


Young attorney finds a solid home at law firm from a remote locale



By Tom Kirvin

Less than four years into her legal career, attorney Emma Dedman already has made her presence known at the New Orleans-based defense litigation firm of Degan, Blanchard & Nash.

And for much of the past year, Dedman has done it from afar – in England and most recently in her adopted home of Jacksonville, Fla., where her husband is stationed at a naval base aboard the USS Winston S. Churchill, a destroyer named after the legendary World War II figure and British prime minister.

But more about that later.

What matters now is that Dedman has not missed a beat by working remotely, validating the confidence displayed in her by the firm’s managing partner Sid Degan.

Degan, one of the founding partners of the firm that opened in 1991 and now totals 45 attorneys, has high praise for Dedman, a 2019 graduate of the Tulane University School of Law who also holds a bachelor’s degree in management from Tulane.

“Emma is an incredibly valuable asset to this law firm, proving herself first as a law clerk when in law school then as an associate after joining us full time following graduation (in 2019),” said Degan. “I can’t say enough good things about her.”

Degan’s interest in her future role with the firm was evident when he called Dedman into an office meeting last year. She presumed it was to discuss an upcoming case assignment. Instead, Degan was more interested in seeing how her wedding plans were going and how the firm could accommodate her work schedule as the big day approached in October 2022.

“My daughter is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, so I’m particularly sensitive to Emma’s situation and the challenges that go along with being in a military family,” Degan remarked. “We, as a firm, were concerned for her and wanted to help her make a smooth transition to a new life.”

His concerns were in keeping with the firm’s commitment to striking the proper work-life balance for its team of lawyers, particularly those in the early stages of their legal careers. In fact, the firm proudly proclaims as much on its website, noting that it is “proud of our efforts to recruit, retain and develop careers of people from diverse backgrounds.”

Evidence of that came recently when the firm was notified that it had achieved Mansfield Rule Certified Plus status,

signifying its deepening commitment to diversity in the legal workplace.

Notably, according to Degan, the firm is of the belief that “our clients are best served by legal teams who reflect the diversity of the communities and cities in which we practice,” referencing its commitment to providing growth opportunities for all of its attorneys regardless of gender or race.

Dedman, who grew up in the Tennessee capital of Nashville, admitted that she was unsure of her long-term prospects with the firm when she became engaged in 2021 to her fiancé Julian (Jules) Caithness, an officer in the British Royal Navy.

“I didn’t know what to expect, but I figured that it wasn’t likely that I would be able to stay with the firm as the wife of someone who was based in England and would probably be stationed overseas,” she explained.

Degan had other ideas and, somewhat fortuitously, so did the Royal Navy, which pegged Dedman’s fiancé for an assignment aboard the Churchill, the first destroyer and only the fourth U.S. Navy warship named after a British citizen.

As part of the naming agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain, the Churchill is the only American vessel to have a Royal Navy exchange officer permanently assigned to the ship’s company. Additionally, the ship is the only U.S. Navy vessel to fly a foreign flag, the Royal Navy’s White Ensign that is flown on special occasions.

The ship currently is ported in Jacksonville at a sprawling naval base along the St. Johns River, where Dedman has the flexibility to work from home, deftly handling a variety of legal matters that run the gamut for the firm that has offices in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette, La.

“I feel fortunate to work for a firm that places a premium on a work-life balance, and has a culture that is supportive and nurturing,” said Dedman, who began working for the firm during her second year of law school. “They believe in flexibility, diversity, mentoring, and offering opportunities for growth.”

Dedman endeared herself to the firm while she was working from abroad over the past year, completing case assignments on an especially timely basis, according to Degan.

“She was in England, which is six hours ahead of us, so she

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was able to work on assignments we gave her at the end of our day, delivering a finished product by the time we got into the office the next day,” Degan explained. “It was as if we had a night shift, and it proved to be a great benefit to some of our clients who in many ways received round-the-clock service because of her.”

Dedman, who has a younger brother Robert, is the daughter of Janna and Marc Dedman. Her mother is the manager of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, while her father is a partner in the Nashville office of Barton LLP, a prominent New York law firm. As an alum of Tulane Law, he played a major role in encouraging his daughter to consider the New Orleans university as a place to attend law school.

Her father, who is chair of the Quality Assurance Board for Primerus™, is understandably proud of his daughter’s accomplishments at Degan, Blanchard & Nash, while also saluting the firm for the foresight it displayed in developing a work model that appeals to young lawyers.

“It’s a great example of a Primerus™ firm thinking outside the box in structuring an effective and efficient remote work option, which can help in the hiring and the retention of top legal talent,” said Marc Dedman. “By being flexible, the firm demonstrated a willingness to adapt to the changing landscape of the legal profession and to use technology in a way that supports time management and a work-life balance.”



Attorney Emma Dedman with her husband, Jules Caithness, who has been a member of the British Royal Navy for the past nine years after earning his commission from the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth.